

Message

From: EPA News [noreply@cision.com]
Sent: 10/15/2021 12:27:56 PM
To: Harris, Michael [harris.michael@epa.gov]
Subject: EPA Chicago - Daily Media Report - Friday, October 15, 2021

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Report Overview:

Total Clips (15)


















Cleanup - Superfund (1)

























Enforcement - Compliance (1)

Water - Drinking (10)

Water - Surface (2)

Other (1)

Headline	Date	Outlet	Outlet State	
Cleanup - Superfund (1)				
 Lear cleanup imminent; City ready to put contaminated property out to bid	10/14/2021	Zanesville Times Recorder	OH	 
Enforcement - Compliance (1)				
 Ohio Ag Connection - ODNR Urges Caution During Wildfire Season	10/14/2021	Ohio Ag Connection	WI	 
Water - Drinking (10)				
 Whitmer signs directive to deliver safe drinking water to Benton Harbor	10/14/2021	WILX-TV Online	MI	 
 Whitmer Signs Directive on Benton Harbor Water, Plans to Replace All Lead Service Lines in 18 months	10/14/2021	WDET-FM Online	MI	 
 Whitmer issues Executive Order on Benton Harbor Water crisis	10/14/2021	Moody on the Market	MI	 
 State criticized for water response in Benton Harbor; Corrosion treatment failed to control harmful lead levels	10/14/2021	Detroit News, The	MI	 


	Michigan governor signs executive directive to help Benton Harbor residents get access to safe drinking water	10/14/2021	WOSH NewsTalk 1490	WI	  
	Michigan governor signs executive directive to help Benton Harbor residents get access to safe drinking water	10/14/2021	WTHI-TV - online	IN	  
	Michigan announces 18-month goal to remove Benton Harbor lead water lines	10/14/2021	Bridge Michigan	MI	  
	Lead Pipes Leave Benton Harbor Residents Without Water	10/14/2021	WWTV-TV Online	MI	  
	Benton Harbor, state officials order urgent response to lead crisis	10/14/2021	Herald-Palladium Online, The	MI	  
	Benton Harbor receiving state resources for safe drinking water	10/14/2021	WNEM-TV Online	MI	  

Water - Surface (2)

	Ohio Department of Agriculture Extends Deadline to Plant Cover Crops	10/14/2021	No-Till Farmer Online	WI	  
	Ohio Ag Connection - ODA Extends H2Ohio Deadline to Plant Cover Crops	10/14/2021	Ohio Ag Connection	WI	  

Other (1)

	Chicago water advocate appointed as Great Lakes regional EPA administrator	10/14/2021	WBAA	IN	  
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News Headline: Lear cleanup imminent; City ready to put contaminated property out to bid | 

News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Zanesville Times Recorder

Outlet State: OH

News Text: ZANESVILLE - Zanesville Mayor Don Mason said he expects to have a decision on how to finance the cleanup of the former Lear Property by the end of the month.

The property has been contaminated with demolition debris, some of which contains asbestos, since the former Lear factory was demolished starting in 2015. The owners abandoned the parcel without cleaning it, leading to lawsuits and the city's eventual ownership of the 28-acre property.

Mason said the engineering firm hired by the city to assess the extent of asbestos contamination on the property has found the contamination is much less than expected, and, as a result, the estimated cleanup cost has fallen from \$5 million to less than \$2 million.

As Hull and Associates has studied the property, Mason said, the estimated amount of debris on the site has gone from 66,000 cubic yards to 16,000 cubic yards. Original engineering estimates said one-third of debris was regulated asbestos containing material, or RACM. Mason said the Ohio EPA now estimates 2 to 3% of the material contains asbestos, substantially reducing the cost of cleanup.

Mason hopes funding currently in the federal budget will pay for the cleanup, but should that provision get stripped from the bill, the city could use American Rescue Plan funds.

On Tuesday, Zanesville City Council approved legislation allowing Mason's administration to enter into an agreement with Hull and Associates for redevelopment and consulting services related to the cleanup. The company will manage the bidding process and cleanup of the site. The contract is for \$86,130.

The next step is to put the cleanup project out to bid. Mason said the winter months are the best time of the year to clean up the site, as contaminated material is frozen and less likely to become airborne.

Mason said getting to this point has been a long process, with many meetings and site visits with his staff, the city's consultants, and state officials "to get us to the point where we are ready to bid."

Council also approved funding for several annual contracts with local agencies on Tuesday.

The city will send \$4,800 to the Muskingum County Humane Society for the city's share of the salary the humane officer.

South East Area Transit will receive \$80,000 in four equal installments over the course of 2022 as the city's share in the regional transportation system's funding. Howard Stewart, the transit authority's director, discussed SEAT's recent expansion, including partnerships with several local agencies.

Council will send \$100,000 to the Zanesville-Muskingum County Port Authority in monthly installments of \$8,337, and one installment of \$8,333. Port Authority Director Matt Abbott outlined some of the recent development activity in the area, including the award-winning National Road Business Park.

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[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Ohio Ag Connection - ODNR Urges Caution During Wildfire Season | 

News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Ohio Ag Connection

Outlet State: WI

News Text: ...lid to provide an enclosed incinerator. Residents should check Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's open burn regulations...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Whitmer signs directive to deliver safe drinking water to Benton Harbor | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WILX-TV Online

Outlet State: MI

News Text: ...Michigander deserves safe drinking water, and every community deserves lead-free pipes," said Gov. Whitmer. "I'm proud to sign an...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Whitmer Signs Directive on Benton Harbor Water, Plans to Replace All Lead Service Lines in 18 months | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WDET-FM Online

Outlet State: MI

News Text: ...of local and state groups submitted a petition calling for the federal Environmental Protection Agency to step in with...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Whitmer issues Executive Order on Benton Harbor Water crisis | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Moody on the Market

Outlet State: MI

News Text: The Governor of Michigan is jumping into the middle of the unfolding clean water crisis in Benton Harbor. Governor Whitmer issued a detailed...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: State criticized for water response in Benton Harbor; Corrosion treatment failed to control harmful lead levels | 

News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Detroit News, The

Outlet State: MI

News Text: "Michigan has the strongest lead in drinking water regulation in the nation, so how did another majority Black city get to three years of elevated lead levels in drinking water without anybody really batting an eye?"

Nick Leonard

Executive director of the Great Lakes Environmental Law

State and city officials treated Benton Harbor's drinking water with a corrosion chemical blend that failed to control harmful levels of lead for more than two years and rejected federal requirements to fully study its effectiveness.

As state officials waited to see if the treatment reduced lead to acceptable levels, they didn't warn Benton Harbor residents that their water was unsafe or provide alternatives, such as bottled water, until late September.

They provided water filters, but critics said not enough effort was put into showing residents how to properly install them - a point that two state environmental officials acknowledge. While state officials maintain they are seeing improvements, only last week did they recommend using only bottled water for drinking, cooking and brushing teeth.

Those failures and delays are among the reasons a group of concerned residents, safe water advocates and environmentalists have filed an emergency petition seeking federal intervention to restore safe drinking water to this impoverished, majority-Black southwest Michigan city of 9,615 residents.

"Michigan has the strongest lead in drinking water regulation in the nation, so how did another majority Black city get to three years of elevated lead levels in drinking water without anybody really batting an eye?" said Nick Leonard, executive director of the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center, one of the petitioners to get the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency involved in Benton Harbor.

Local, state and federal officials need to take a hard look at why the crisis in Benton Harbor happened, especially during the Whitmer administration, he said.

The polyphosphate blend the city began using in March 2019 - and adjusted the dosage a year later - has not lowered Benton Harbor's levels of lead below the state and federal action levels. In 2018, when Benton Harbor recorded its first year of the lead exceedance, eight homes tested above the federal action level of 15 parts per billion - the highest at 60 ppb - compared with this year's readings, when 11 homes tested above 15 ppb with the highest coming in at 889 ppb.

The citywide reading in 2018 was 22 ppb compared with 24 ppb in this year's sampling.

The lead situation in Benton Harbor, a predominately African American city, comes only a few years after the Flint water crisis discovery and promises from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer that safe drinking water would be a central theme of her administration. Her predecessor, Gov. Rick Snyder, was roundly criticized and criminally charged for the lead-tainted water scandal in Flint.

Elin Betanzo, a Metro Detroit water quality specialist and former EPA official who helped uncover the Flint water crisis, said the continued exceedances of the action levels show the state's approach isn't working in Benton Harbor. And there was no "meaningful public outreach" explaining to people that the water wasn't safe to drink, she said.

"The fact that it hasn't been approached with any urgency and it's just been drawn out for so long makes me concerned that we haven't learned anything from the Flint water crisis, and we haven't made the changes necessary to ensure that a community has access to safe water to drink every day," Betanzo said.

But Liesl Clark, director of the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, said statistics show lead levels are coming down and that Benton Harbor may soon stop exceeding the lead action level. "We want to get the lead out," she said.

State officials cited statistics that show since the city's lead exceedance was first recorded in 2018, the percentage of samples where no lead was detected almost doubled, from 17% to 33%. The percentage of samples with less than 10 ppb also improved from 60% in 2018 to 79% in 2021.

But Betanzo disagrees, saying the data doesn't show lead levels are declining, as state officials argue.

The 90th percentile amount of lead is consistently above 20 ppb and the maximum lead level detected has been steadily increasing during each six-month sampling period, ending at a high of 889 ppb, Betanzo said. The 90th percentile is a metric used to characterize the range of lead in the community that considers all the samples together.

"Their job is compliance," said Betanzo, noting Benton Harbor has been consistently above 15 ppb for three straight years.

The samples with the higher lead readings might have been from the same homes that were sampled before, said Eric Oswald, who heads ELGE's drinking water and environmental health division, adding that the treatment plant operator in charge at the time "wouldn't give us the addresses that they were taking lead and copper samples from."

That operator, Michael O'Malley, was fired by the state last year "because he was really impeding our progress on some of the data we were trying to get," he said. O'Malley could not be reached for comment.

EGLE last month appointed a new clean water public advocate and last week announced the creation of a drinking water advisory panel. On Monday, the state health department said it was providing free blood lead testing and home services for residents to help them address sources of lead in their homes.

"We think there's an important sense of urgency, and that's why we're talking about these action steps that are being taken immediately," said Clark, referencing bottled water distribution as well as going door-to-door to distribute water filters. "One of the most important pieces is that this is a historical challenge for us in Michigan. We are very open to understanding what we could have done better, how can we learn from this."

Experts have determined there is no safe level of lead consumption, and adults exposed to lead in drinking water can develop problems in bones, teeth, blood, liver, kidney and the brain. In children, lead is more of a health risk and can affect their brains and growing bodies.

EGLE should have told residents three years ago "that the water was bad, that it was not drinkable," said the Rev. Edward Pinkney, president of the Benton Harbor Community Water Council, who has been complaining for years to city and state officials.

"That was the No. 1 thing that they could have come out and said, 'Do not drink the water.' But they failed to do so," Pinkney said. "They are in denial. You never hear them talk about how bad the water is ... in three years. That's criminal."

EPA officials have declined to address specifics of the emergency petition, filed Sept. 9, or whether the state should be held accountable. But they said they share the concerns of Benton Harbor residents about lead in their water.

"EPA's highest priority is protecting the people of Benton Harbor from lead exposure in drinking water," said Elizabeth Cisar, a senior adviser in EPA's Office of Water. "EPA is committed to working with the state of Michigan, providing oversight and technical support to ensure all residents have access to bottled water and/or using filters properly."

Corrosion control

The water treatment plant in Benton Harbor that went into service in 1927 has had its share of problems as described in the state's 2018 Sanitary Survey review.

The sanitary survey found eight "significant deficiencies," especially in areas of the treatment and distribution system. The maintenance of the water plant and distribution system components was "severely lacking," according to the review.

Unlike Flint, where the state's environmental department did not urge applying proper corrosion-control chemicals to the city's new, more acidic river water source in 2014, Benton Harbor gets its water from nearby Lake Michigan. And it hasn't changed its water source. The situation has puzzled state experts.

"Any amount of lead in drinking water concerns me," Oswald said. "Benton Harbor was an interesting case. There was no source change, there was no treatment change. It's one of those things where you scratch your head and wonder, 'Well, what happened? Why are you seeing these elevated numbers all of a sudden?'"

While he regrets that Benton Harbor has had three years of lead exceedances, the state did all it could, Oswald said. The city's treatment plant, he said, was not originally designed to have corrosion control treatment injected into the system.

Environmental groups said in the emergency petition to the EPA that the state's use of corrosion inhibitor was used without studying it - a recommendation made by the EPA but rejected by state officials as too costly and lengthy.

Oswald said that type of thorough EPA corrosion control study would take years and is expensive. "The concern was, we had an ALE (action level exceedance). We wanted to get some level of corrosion control inhibitor in the system as soon as we possibly could and be conservative about how we did it," he said.

That approach included a smaller study and using a corrosion control for a year from March 2019 to March 2020 that "we realized it wasn't as effective as we had hoped it would be," Oswald said. "And we changed the blend."

"I think it is working. It just takes time to passivate and stabilize a system," he said.

But the EPA intervention petition said Benton Harbor began a corrosion control study in August - 30 months after the state ordered the city to use corrosion control treatment that wasn't working. One of the bidders for that study noted "the \$50,000 budget is not enough to perform an adequate study," according to the petition.

The petition also claims EGLE violated the state and federal lead and copper rule by delaying "a fully compliant corrosion control study."

The EPA guidance manual states that if a water system uses a polyphosphate, it should be studied, especially in a system with lead service lines, Betanzo said.

"It's like right there as clear as day, and EGLE rejected that advice and chose to do it their own way," she said.

Trust broken

City resident Carmela Patton, 43, said EGLE "has really failed us" and isn't convinced state officials can be trusted to get the lead out of the drinking water.

"They never told us the water was unsafe," said Patton, who said her skin was starting to itch because of the water. "You know how Flint blew up? We didn't get blown up (with the attention) like that. It's heartbreaking, it's sad. It makes you feel unappreciated as a person, like nobody cares."

The state and others were also slow to inform the Benton Harbor public about how to properly use the filters to maximize their effectiveness, resulting in residents not placing them on their faucets, according to residents and environmentalists.

The state has been trying to rebuild trust by distributing bottled water - more than 33,000 cases since Sept. 30 through Wednesday, according to the state Department of Health and Human Services. And nearly 2,600 filters have been passed out since 2019 with roughly 3,000 municipal water customers, state officials said.

Oswald admitted, in hindsight, just giving out water filters and making public announcements "may not have been enough."

Regina Strong, the environmental justice public advocate for EGLE who has been leading the filter distribution effort in Benton Harbor, admitted to some mistakes with distribution but "now we're moving forward full blast."

"There were filters available, but access was an issue for some people, how it was distributed, where it was, so we're trying to work to correct all that moving forward," Strong said.

The removal of lead lines, environmentalists contend, would help eliminate the need for corrosion treatments, but the replacement effort has been slow. To date, 219 lines have been replaced with 100 more expected by next April. There are an estimated 2,400 lead lines in the city.

Clark, EGLE's director, said there hasn't been enough investment in water infrastructure around the state and especially in Benton Harbor. Whitmer pledged to get all the lead pipes removed in five years or less, which some say isn't fast enough.

Whitmer recently signed into law a \$10 million appropriation for lead pipe removal in Benton Harbor. The state is budgeting \$20 million for the five-year removal process.

Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad said meetings are underway to get millions of more dollars in a bid to get the lead pipes out in months instead of years in a partnership with the city and state.

"I'm not the official that's going to play the blame game. My focus is on solutions," Muhammad said. "Because this problem, it was inherited. I can't speak for EGLE. I'm working with EGLE. And if there were mistakes made on their end, then they have to be accountable and responsible for that."

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"Michigan has the strongest lead in drinking water regulation in the nation, so how did another majority Black city get to three years of elevated lead levels in drinking water without anybody really batting an eye?"


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City resident Carmela Patton

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Michigan governor signs executive directive to help Benton Harbor residents get access to safe drinking water | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WOSH NewsTalk 1490

Outlet State: WI

News Text: Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed an executive directive Thursday designed to help residents of Benton Harbor get access to safe...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Michigan governor signs executive directive to help Benton Harbor residents get access to safe drinking water | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WTHI-TV - online

Outlet State: IN

News Text: Michigan governor signs executive directive to help Benton Harbor residents get access to safe drinking water Michigan...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Michigan announces 18-month goal to remove Benton Harbor lead water lines | 

News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Bridge Michigan

Outlet State: MI

News Text: ...of community, environmental and public health groups petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to get involved in...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Lead Pipes Leave Benton Harbor Residents Without Water | 

News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WWTV-TV Online

Outlet State: MI

News Text: ... Just last month, residents and some activists petitioned to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to do something about...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Benton Harbor, state officials order urgent response to lead crisis | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Herald-Palladium Online, The

Outlet State: MI

News Text: ...in November using a \$5.5 million grant the city received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in October 2020. The...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Benton Harbor receiving state resources for safe drinking water | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WNEM-TV Online

Outlet State: MI

News Text: ...with urgency, Whitmer said. Whitmer also committed the state to expediting lead service line replacements using additional federal, state,...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Ohio Department of Agriculture Extends Deadline to Plant Cover Crops | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: No-Till Farmer Online

Outlet State: WI

News Text: ...a collaboration involving ODA, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Lake Erie...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Ohio Ag Connection - ODA Extends H2Ohio Deadline to Plant Cover Crops | 


News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: Ohio Ag Connection

Outlet State: WI

News Text: ...a collaboration involving ODA, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Lake Erie...

[Return to Top](#)

News Headline: Chicago water advocate appointed as Great Lakes regional EPA administrator | 

News Date: 10/14/2021

Outlet Full Name: WBAA

Outlet State: IN

News Text: ...Joe Biden has chosen a new administrator to oversee Region 5 of the Environmental Protection Agency - which covers Indiana and...

[Return to Top](#)
